

2003-05 HUNTING SEASON OPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

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Wildlife Program
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2003-05 HUNTING SEASON QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Using the draft Game Management Plan as a guideline, WDFW biologists met in early October 2002 to develop a series of options. These options were also based on the public input we have received over the past several years (since the last three year season package was adopted). This questionnaire represents WDFW biologists' collective judgment of season options that will meet game population objectives and receive public support.

Options Questionnaire

- Objective: Refine options for public comment process in January 2003
- The Game Management Advisory Council discussed the results of the questionnaire and the options selected for hunting season alternatives
- Options will be narrowed down to the most preferred alternatives

The options were available for public comment in the form of an Internet questionnaire in November 2002. The idea was to narrow the scope of the biologists' options into a few alternatives based on their level of public support. Those alternatives are part of a broader public comment process during January 2003. The public is encouraged to recommend any hunting season alternatives they feel are important throughout this process.

Options Survey

- Participants – 2610
- Purchased hunting license – 2534
- No license in past 2 years – 48
- No response to question - 28

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) comments and suggestions are provided for those options where GMAC members felt strongly or differed from either the questionnaire respondents or WDFW suggestions.

Options Survey – Hunter Types

- Deer – 2399
- Elk – 2136
- Waterfowl – 702
- Upland Birds – 840
- Grouse - 1504

Respondents to the questionnaire represented a variety of types of hunters. The sample of appears to be a good cross section.

Hunter Types

- Deer Hunters
 - ◆ Archers – 713 (27%)
 - ◆ Muzzleloaders – 284 (11%)
 - ◆ Modern – 1627 (62%)
- Elk Hunters
 - ◆ Archers – 822 (35%)
 - ◆ Muzzleloaders – 375 (16%)
 - ◆ Modern – 1124 (48%)

2001 Licenses Sold:

Deer Hunters:

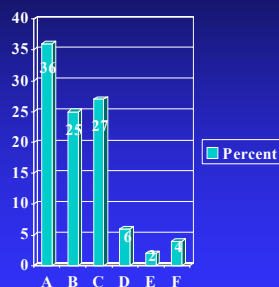
Archers – 18,346 (11.4%)
 Muzzleloaders – 8,518 (5.2%)
 Modern Firearm – 134,997 (83.3%)

Elk Hunters:

Archers – 15,776 (16.1%)
 Muzzleloaders – 12,885 (13.2%)
 Modern Firearm – 69,071 (70.7%)

Equipment Regulations

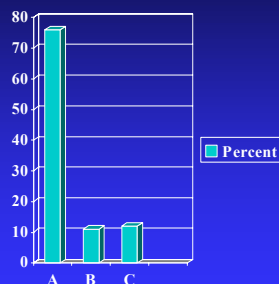
- A. Status Quo
- B. electronic devices attached to weapon
- C. night vision, heat sensors, trail monitors, & laser sights
- D. communication devices
- E. all electronic devices
- Others



Alternatives: Sixty four percent of the respondents would like to see something other than status quo, although they were split on choices b and c. WDFW will take these two alternatives forward during the January public comment period.

Baiting

- A. status quo - game birds & black bear
- B. add big game to game birds and black bear
- C. restrictions on baiting of all hunted wildlife

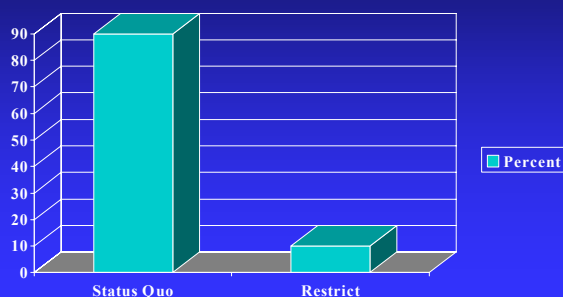


Alternatives: Clearly the respondents did not support changes to baiting regulations at this time.

Recommendation: WDFW does not plan to recommend further restrictions on baiting at this time.

Rifle Caliber Restriction

- 50 Caliber

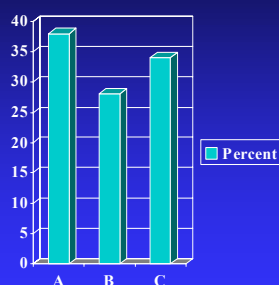


Alternatives: Again a clear preference by the public to retain the use of 50 caliber rifles for hunting.

Recommendation: None, WDFW does not plan to recommend further restrictions on the use of 50 caliber rifles at this time.

Whitetail Restrictions

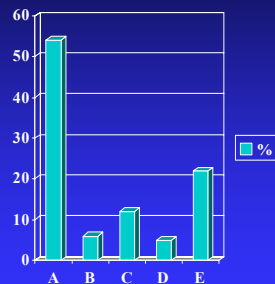
- A. Status Quo – any buck (no increase in mature bucks)
- B. Three point restriction
- C. Reduce early season by 5 days for bucks; antlerless hunting would continue



Alternatives: There was no clear preference for any of these options. These options will be separated into two questions for further public comment: 1. Do you support restrictions designed to increase the number of mature bucks in the population and in the harvest as recommended by WDFW biologists? 2. Which of the options designed to increase mature bucks would you support? The alternatives will include options b and c and a late season restriction.

Restricted Weapon Areas

- A. no restricted weapon areas
- B. select GMUs
- C. archers and muzzleloaders only
- D. high buck hunt
- E. archery and muzzleloader only GMUs



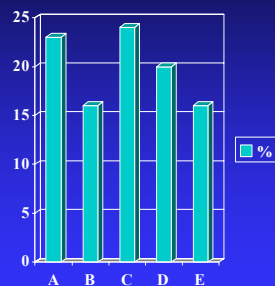
Alternatives: It is not clear if hunters support the intent of providing longer seasons in some areas by limiting the types of weapons used. However it is clear that none of the options provided were supported.

The GMAC felt that many of these options may further divide hunters and that participation might need to be restricted by permits. The two alternatives they suggested were: 1) Provide late opportunity in units not currently opened for a late hunt if feasible; 2) Use current firearm restriction areas to accommodate this idea.

Recommendation: WDFW will re-word the question and provide GMAC's recommended alternatives for public comment in January.

Equitable Opportunity

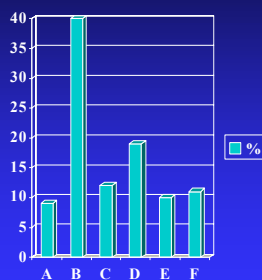
- A. Status Quo
- B. antlerless to group with lowest participation/success rate
- C. shift season timing
- D. shift season length
- E. add GMUs



Alternatives: It is clear that most respondents (>75%) would prefer a different process than currently conducted. In order to better determine public preferences during the January comment period, WDFW will re-word the question and provide specific examples of how this might be achieved at the public meetings.

Antlerless Harvest

- A. Status Quo
- B. "B" tags
- C. antlerless only permits
- D. extend timeframe
- E. prior to general season
- F. private lands only

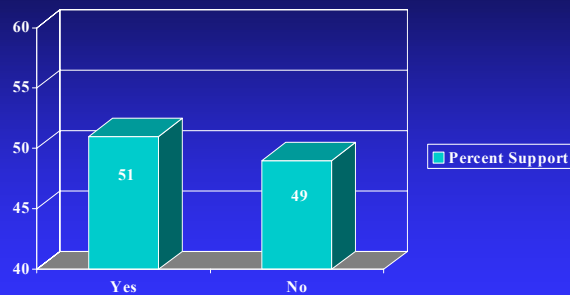


Alternatives: The respondents clearly favor the issuance of a second tag to improve the harvest of antlerless deer and elk. However, "B" tags will not work in all situations so refined options b through f may also be recommended when appropriate.

GMAC suggestions: The "B" tag should be for private lands only to focus harvest on damage problems. Extending the antlerless opportunity into the late season (option d) should be available for disabled, youth, and seniors. Improve access to private lands.

Recommendation: WDFW will give "B" tags priority consideration in developing antlerless harvest recommendations in March.

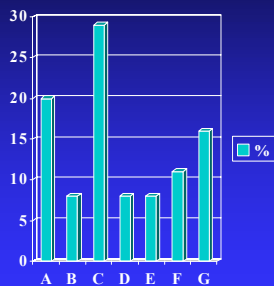
Antlerless Allocation to Disabled, Youth, and Seniors



Alternatives: While broad support for youth hunting opportunity was expressed during previous public opinion surveys and in development of WDFW's Game Management Plan, the response to this question makes it clear that disabled, youth, and senior opportunities need to be carefully crafted. WDFW will provide different alternatives for disabled, youth, and senior hunts during the January public comment period to better determine public support for these special opportunities.

Okanogan Youth Deer Hunt

- A. any deer
- B. start youth opportunity after opening weekend
- C. 3 pt or antlerless
- D. any deer outside of general season dates
- E. any deer permits for youth and adults
- F. antlerless only permits for youth and adults
- G. no special opportunity

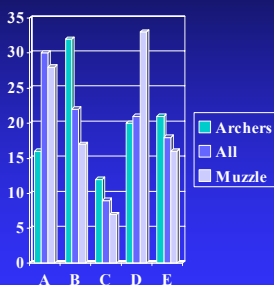


Alternatives: WDFW will continue to provide special youth opportunity in the Okanogan. Options a and c will be further discussed during the public comment process in January as well as potential permit restrictions on the number of participants.

GMAC: Many members supported "any deer" permits to eliminate the chance that a young hunter might accidentally take a spike or two point buck under a three-point restriction and to control participation levels.

Early Archery Elk Season

- A. Sept 1-14
- B. after labor day
- C. split season in w. Wash.
- D. Oct 1; split GMUs
- E. Sept 5-18



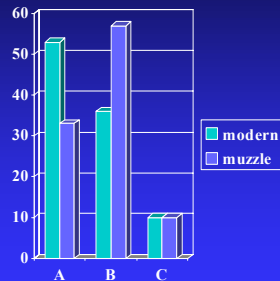
Alternatives: Based on the questionnaire responses, options a, b, d, and e will be further discussed during the public comment period in January.

GMAC: Some members asked why the recommendation from the organized archery groups of September 8 to 21 was not provided as an option for public comment.

WDFW response: the consensus of WDFW biologists at their October meeting was that the archer's option extended too far into the peak of breeding every year and would result in undesirable disturbance to breeding bulls.

Muzzleloader/Modern Permits

- A. apply together
- B. separate allocation
- C. separate seasons; common application pool

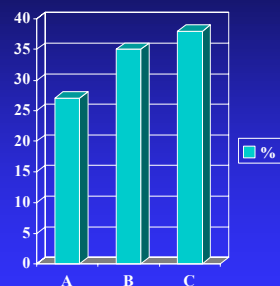


Alternatives: It is clear that muzzleloader hunters would prefer to apply for a separate pool of permits even if they lose some hunts.

Recommendation: WDFW plans to recommend a separate pool of muzzleloader permits to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Advanced Hunter Education

- A. "B" tags
- B. hot spot priority
- C. private land hunts

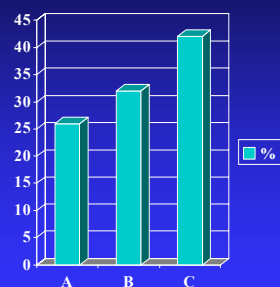


Alternatives: There appears to be general support for all three of these options with private land hunts the most preferred.

Recommendation: Specific recommendations will be developed in March using this information.

Margaret & Toutle Permit Hunts

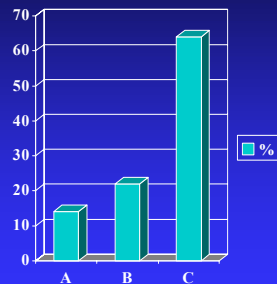
- A. allow bear & cougar hunting
- B. must have valid elk tag to hunt bear & cougar during elk seasons
- C. close units for bear & cougar hunting during elk seasons



Recommendation: WDFW plans to recommend Option c for Commission action.

Spring Bear Season

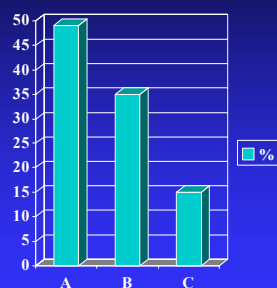
- A. no season
- B. specific mapped areas
- C. portions of GMUs with high levels of tree damage



Recommendation: WDFW will recommend a spring hunt when the logistics are worked out with private landowners. When the recommendation is made, it will be for portions of GMUs (option C) as preferred by respondents.

Fall Black Bear Seasons

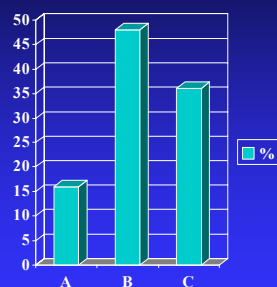
- A. Aug 1 – mid Nov
- B. after labor day – Nov 30
- C. Aug 1 in w. Wash.; after labor day in e. Wash.



Alternatives: This appears to be a very split opinion. All three options will be provided for further discussion in January. Option b will be modified to say: after Labor Day through December 15.

Cougar Seasons

- A. Sept – Nov
- B. Sept – Nov with permits for late hunts
- C. Sept – Nov with extension on private lands Aug-Mar



Alternatives: No changes are anticipated at this time for the 2003-05 season. In the future however, alternatives b and c may be considered depending on harvest objectives. GMAC: A member suggested increasing the cougar tag price as an alternative to reduce cougar harvest if necessary.

Recommendation: None at this time, however the harvest level in the Blue Mountains cougar management unit has exceeded management guidelines. WDFW will closely monitor harvest and initiate a mortality study to determine if current harvest is significantly impacting the cougar population.

Once in a Lifetime Restriction for Mtn Goat, Bighorn Sheep, & Moose

- Selected once in a lifetime 40%
- Harvest once in a lifetime 60%

Recommendation: WDFW will recommend to the Commission in March that the lifetime restriction apply to harvest rather than selection for mountain goat, bighorn sheep and moose permits.

Remove Lifetime Restriction for Antlerless Moose Hunts???

- Yes 61%
- No 39%

Recommendation: WDFW will recommend the removal of the lifetime restriction for antlerless moose hunts.

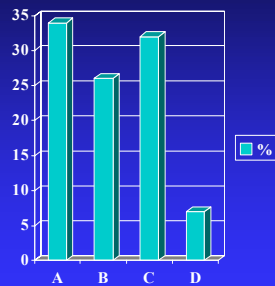
Crowding in Bighorn Sheep Units

- All hunters have same dates – 46%
- Separate dates to reduce crowding – 54%

Recommendation: WDFW will conduct a survey of 2002 permit holders and then make a recommendation to the Commission in March.

Furbearer Hunting Seasons

- A. no new seasons
- B. Apr 1 – Oct 31 on private lands; Nov 1 – Mar 31 statewide
- C. add restrictions as appropriate
- D. private lands season only year around



Alternatives: These options will be reshaped, alternatives for seasons will include: outside of U.S. Forest Service lands and by permit only. Other alternatives will include which species may be killed.

GMAC: Some members felt strongly that furbearer seasons should not be recommended because utilization of the animal would be limited. Others recommended allowing hunting on private lands only with a permit from WDFW or that seasons should be for private lands only.

September Goose Season in Eastern Washington

- Retain current six day season – 36%
- One weekend early season – 64%

Recommendation: WDFW will recommend a weekend season for the September goose hunt.

Develop Limited Access Areas for Waterfowl Hunting???

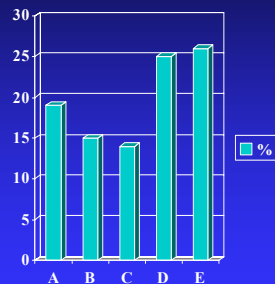
Waterfowl Hunters Only

- No – 70%
- Yes – 30%

Recommendation: None at this time. There was little support for limited access areas for waterfowl hunting.

Which Limitations???

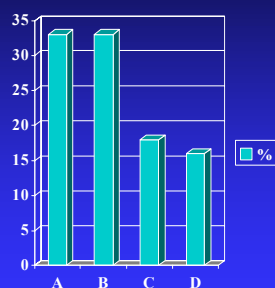
- A. established blinds
- B. drawing for blinds
- C. drawing for access
- D. hunt 3 days/week
- E. shotgun shell limits



Recommendation: Consistent with responses to the previous question, waterfowl hunters preferred more general restrictions (options d and e) rather than specific permit limitations or established blind sites. Because previous opinion surveys indicated relatively high dissatisfaction by waterfowl hunters, additional surveys will be conducted to determine what hunters would like WDFW to do to improve satisfaction.

Turkey Hunting Seasons

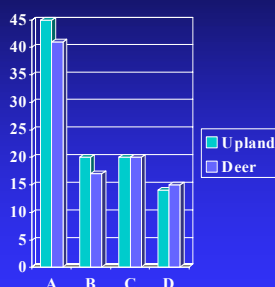
- A. increase permit levels
- B. extend season dates (Sept/Oct)
- C. seven day general season
- D. AHE permits for nuisance problems



Recommendation: WDFW will conduct a survey of turkey hunters to develop a recommendation that combines options a and b.

Pheasant Season Opening Date

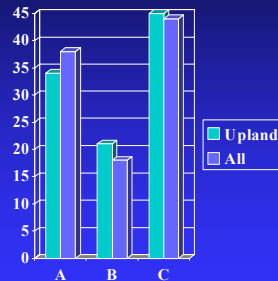
- A. first Saturday in Oct
- B. consistent with deer opener
- C. 3rd Saturday in Oct
- D. Nov 1 – Dec 31



Alternatives: Because options b and c would both resolve the deer/pheasant hunter conflict in some areas, option c will be provided for further discussion in January along with option a.

Youth Turkey Season

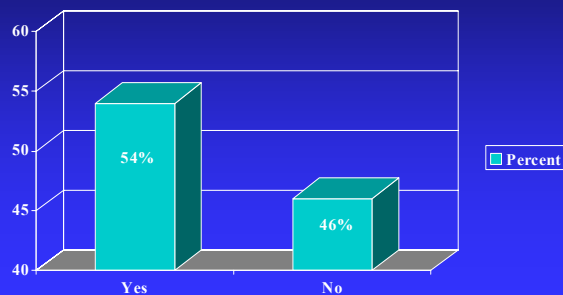
- A. weekend before general season
- B. weekend after general season
- C. no special season



Recommendation: Because the majority of hunters supported some type of youth season and most of those chose option a, the weekend before the general season will be recommended to the Commission in March.

Youth Chukar/Hun Season???

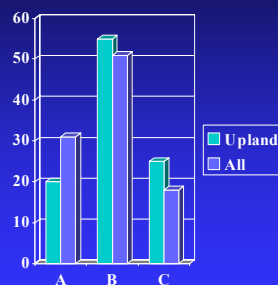
Added onto current youth pheasant, quail, & waterfowl weekend



Recommendation: WDFW will recommend adding chukar and gray partridge (huns) to the youth weekend hunt for waterfowl and upland birds.

Quail Season Opening Date

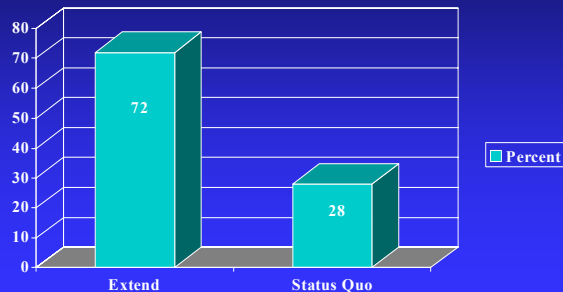
- A. first Saturday in Oct
- B. Oct 1
- C. consistent with pheasant opener



Recommendation: WDFW will recommend that the quail season open October 1st along with chukar and gray partridge.

Western Wash. Pheasant Season

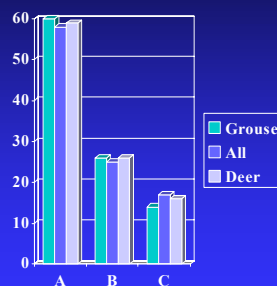
- Support extended season Dec 1-15; but no birds released



Recommendation: WDFW will recommend the extension of the western Washington pheasant season in areas where there are few conflicts with other users.

Grouse Hunting Weapons

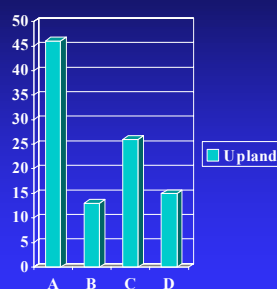
- A. Status Quo
- B. shotgun, archery, muzzleloader, handgun, rim-fire rifle
- C. shotgun, archery, muzzleloader



Alternatives: While most hunters prefer to retain current weapon choices for hunting forest grouse, many were split on what restrictions to implement. In order to facilitate further debate, WDFW will provide options a and b for discussion during the January comment period.

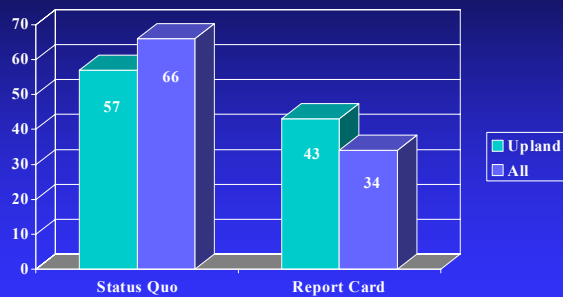
Dog Training Season

- A. Aug 1-Mar 31; except 8-4 on pheasant release sites
- B. restrict on pheasant release sites
- C. require w. Wash permit to train
- D. restrict from Wildlife Areas & pheasant release sites



Recommendation: Based on the responses, WDFW will resolve conflicts on a case by case basis on specific release sites. Language will be added to the hunting pamphlet to clarify what is required to train dogs on pheasant release sites.

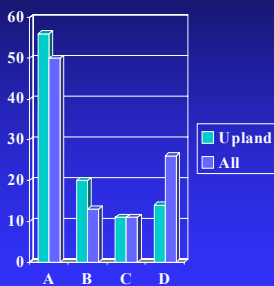
Mtn Quail Harvest Monitoring



Recommendation: A report card will not be recommended at this time, WDFW will review 2001 harvest data and determine if alternative techniques for obtaining mountain quail harvest information are feasible.

Non-toxic Shot Restrictions

- A. Status Quo - listed site restrictions
- B. w. Wash pheasant release sites
- C. w. Wash pheasant release sites and state wildlife areas
- D. all upland bird hunting



Recommendation: WDFW will continue to recommend the addition of specific sites for further regulation of lead shot for upland bird hunting as appropriate (status quo).